

Marilyn Rasmussen

Second District



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COMMITTEES: Agriculture & Environment (Ranking Democrat), Education and Transportation

Dear Friends,

The 1998 legislative session went quickly and finished on time in the allotted 60 days.

Our primary focus this year was **improving education, toughening laws against drunk drivers, and finding a workable solution to our state's growing transportation crisis.** As a mother of seven children and a local resident for 37 years, I know how these and other important issues affect every one of us.

Which is not to say that everything went smoothly, or that all of our goals were achieved. In a year when the state has a budget surplus of almost \$1 billion, **only \$17 million was given to schools.** It's troubling to me that in a time of plenty our state Legislature missed numerous opportunities to invest in the future by funding children's health care, class-size reductions in schools, and a responsible transportation plan.

Of course, many good things were accomplished this session. **We passed a package of tougher drunk driving laws that send a strong message: No more!** We also had a big success with the Highway 7 access management issue, and worked out a fair compromise for the many small businesses along Pacific Avenue. As the owner of a family farm, I understand how important it is to have the government working with you.

Details on these issues and other bills I worked on during the session are highlighted in this report. **Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.** My home serves as my district office, and the number there is (253) 847-3276. You can also get a message to me in Olympia by calling the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000. Remember, I work for you all year round!

Warmest regards,

Marilyn Rasmussen
State Senator
2nd District



Eatonville student Lisa Crawford worked as a Senate page during the 1998 legislative session.

Tougher Drunk Driving Laws

Last year in America, more than 17,000 people were killed — and another one million injured — in drunk driving accidents. **More than 350 people were hurt or killed on Washington's roads.** Clearly, we must stop this horrible tragedy.

In an effort to reduce alcohol-related traffic accidents, the Legislature approved a package of bills this session designed to crack down on drunk drivers. What's more, **we finally put a stop to the "revolving door" in our legal system** that allowed repeat offenders to continue driving the roads.

The **bills that have been signed into law** by Gov. Locke will:

- ✓ lower the legal blood-alcohol content from .10 to .08;
- ✓ add two years to vehicular homicide sentences for previous DUI convictions;
- ✓ allow police to suspend the license of a drunk driver immediately upon arrest;
- ✓ limit “deferred prosecutions” to just one per lifetime;
- ✓ keep DUI convictions on your driving record for seven years instead of just five.

These tough new laws are a giant step in the right direction, and they send a message that is loud and clear: No more! There will be no more compassion for drunk drivers who cause so much carnage, pain, and suffering. People who choose to drink and drive must know there are serious consequences to their reckless actions. We need to get these people off the road, once and for all. It’s time for strong punishment and **no more second chances!**

Education

The story of education this session is one of missed opportunities.

With a booming economy and a huge budget surplus, the state Legislature **had a chance to make an investment in schools and children** — the kind of investment that continues to pay dividends for years to come. Unfortunately, this year’s education budget was very short-sighted.

The bill that passed through the Senate and House, with much opposition from Democrats, provides only \$17 million for education. Of that money, more than \$9 million was tied to a phonics-only teaching program. While phonics should certainly be one tool at every teacher’s disposal, research has shown that different children learn to read using a variety of different methods. Teachers should be trained in all of these reading approaches and allowed to use what works best for each child.

All of us want our children to have the best education possible, an education that prepares them for the many challenges that lie ahead. But we **missed a great chance this year** to give our state’s teachers and schools the tools they need to do their job.

One good thing we did for education this session was to give \$8 million to a program that will train **tutors who help our children to read**. This is money well spent.

We also approved the pre-paid college tuition program that allows parents to purchase their child’s tuition a bit at a time. That program starts this summer.

But surely the most irresponsible action was failing to address the **overcrowding in our state’s classrooms**. Far too many children are competing for their teacher’s attention these days. In fact, only three states in the nation have classes more crowded than ours.

Schools all across the state are in dire need of new materials, new construction, and money for teacher instruction. We have raised academic standards for our children, but we’re asking them and their teachers to achieve more with less.

The fact is we’re spending nearly \$200 less per child than we were just five years ago. We must rearrange our priorities.

This means next year must be dedicated to education. We cannot leave the 20th century without making a strong commitment to Washington’s youth. **We must do better.**

I will continue to work tirelessly for children, to help make sure they get the best education we can provide. **A sound investment in our children today reaps untold rewards for all of us tomorrow.**

Transportation

It was a disappointing session regarding our state’s transportation problems. A number of good bills — bills that would have provided real solutions — were stalled or run off the road by legislative leadership.

At a time when our highways are choked by congestion and badly in need of repair, the majority party chose politics over people. With a **transportation crisis threatening our region’s economic viability and our cherished way of life**, what we needed was a responsible, long-term funding plan.

What we got was a shell game. The transportation plan has traditionally been based on “pay as you go.” But the plan put forth this year in the Republican budget is a bungled mix of borrowing and cash transfers that takes money from schools and children. **To get five years of highway funding, we’re being asked to pay 25 years of interest on the bonds.** This doesn’t compute in my book, and **any small business owner can see this is no way to run things.**

As your state senator, I was elected to make the hard decisions and find bipartisan solutions on issues like transportation that affect us all. But this year the Legislature passed the buck. **The people of our state expect and deserve better.** If anything is going to get done around here, we have to stop thinking about the next election and **start thinking about the next generation.**

On a local note, both the **Pacific Avenue construction bill** and the **Meridian funding bill** hit a roadblock.

Working with Sen. Calvin Goings (25th District), we drafted a funding proposal for much-needed improvements along Highway 161 and had it placed in the supplemental transportation budget; it would have required no additional revenue. Unfortunately, this budget amendment failed to pass the House. However, the Meridian projects are included as pork-barrel projects in the transportation plan that was approved by the Legislature. This may be popular, but not good public policy.

The transportation plan will be on the ballot in November.

As you may know, all parties in the Pacific Avenue access management issue met in Olympia to hammer out a compromise, one that grandfathered-in certain access points and provided more lighting. **In short, all of the concerns of small businesses were heard.**

The bill we drafted didn't make it through the House, but the message did — it was heard loud and clear. **If this project becomes a reality, we have received written assurance from the Department of Transportation that all the proposed changes will be honored, and small business owners will be given a fair shake.**

This goes to show what happens when government listens to the people. **You can fight city hall — and win!**

Social Issues

The **ban on the partial-birth abortion procedure** passed the state Senate, but was not acted on by the House. Although I voted in favor of the ban, this procedure is already illegal and a class C felony.

Again this year I supported the **ban on gay marriage** and voted along with a majority of senators to override Gov. Locke's veto. This bill simply codifies state law, which clearly says that same-sex marriage is illegal. Plain and simple.

As for **affirmative action**, I believe it's time we revisit the original laws and breathe some new life into them. Clearly, these laws have helped changed the face of America's workplace, and allowed many opportunities— both in jobs and education— for those who may have not otherwise been given a chance. The real problem we need to address is the lack of

equality in education opportunities. In the spirit of the 1960s, let's push for positive change.

For this reason, I supported an alternative to Initiative 200, but this never came to the Senate for a vote.

Flooding and Water Issues

As you know, I'm a strong supporter of **flood prevention** programs. In April, surface water fees in Pierce County increased nearly 300 percent.

The county is the taxing authority here, so there's not much we could do on the state level to offset this fee increase. We did, however, manage to provide some measure of **protection for the elderly and disabled citizens living on fixed monthly incomes**. A bill that I co-sponsored, and was signed by the governor, recommends the county consider the low-income status of these folks when imposing heavy fees.

I will continue to push for a comprehensive flood mapping program, so that we can be sure the county is spending any new money in a manner that benefits us all.

This session I also worked closely with Spanaway Water Company to achieve an agreement on sharing of water rights. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass, which means it will be high on my agenda next session. **We must ensure that our growing population has a steady supply of clean water.**

A special thanks to Luanne Green, who serves as my Legislative Assistant. She also will be working for us during the interim.

*Again, we're always here for you. Please use the card on the back to write me and let me know what issues interest or concern you. **Keep in touch!***



Tia Leonard and Jason Meaden, who are home schooled, also had an opportunity to serve as Senate pages during the session.

Thank You, Pages!

Local students see government in action

Part of the reason the Legislature finished its business on time this year was all the hard work by students from our area. Pages serve one week during the legislative session, delivering messages and documents between buildings and on the Senate floor. **In the process, students learn firsthand about how our government really works.** If you know a teenager between the ages of 14 and 16 who would like to serve as a legislative page next year, please contact my office for more information. For now, my heartfelt thanks goes out to these hard workers.

Megan Best, Bethel Junior High
Ananda Case, Rogers High School
Lisa Crawford, Eatonville High
Karen Johnson, Bethel Junior High
Jason Meaden, Home School
Tia Leonard, Home School
Jessica Smith, Bethel High School
Beth Ward, Cedarcrest Junior High

Restoring Wild Salmon Runs

This year we took several important steps to preserve our quality of life and protect our dwindling salmon and steelhead runs.

These efforts included:

- ✓ creating a framework for local watershed planning to determine how much water should be left in rivers and streams for fish and how much is available for other uses;
- ✓ streamlining the permit process for citizens who want to conduct small-scale salmon restoration projects;
- ✓ authorizing money for salmon habitat projects such as culvert removal, large woody debris and other instream improvements; and
- ✓ requiring the state Department of Fish and Wildlife to mark all hatchery Chinook so fishermen can distinguish them from wild Chinook.

Fire Departments

DuPont Non-Emergency. . . . (253) 964-8121 ext. 372
Orting Non-Emergency. (360) 893-2221
South Prairie Non-Emergency (360) 897-8412
Graham/Kapowsin, FPD #21 (253) 847-8811

Police Departments

DuPont Non-Emergency. (253) 864-8121
Orting Police Non-Emergency (360) 893-3111

Schools

Sumner School District
Dr. Eismann (253) 891-6000

Cities

Roy Council meets 2nd and 4th Mondays @ 7:30 p.m.

Please replace the numbers in the 1998 Government Guide I sent you with these corrected numbers.

Please Keep In Touch!

Please feel free to use this card to send me your questions, comments, or requests for more information. Address your envelope to: Senator Marilyn Rasmussen, PO Box 40482, Olympia, WA 98504-0482.

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